**SEVEN QUESTION REFLECTION ASSIGNMENT**  
  
**Digital Literacies Institute Closing Reflection**  
Please provides a thoughtful and organized response to each question below. Your response may be in writing or it may take the form of a recorded podcast or video commentary. Feel free to be creative! All responses should be posted no later than August 5, 2013 at 5PM.

1. Describe some of the digital literacies that you learned about this week. What did you know about these topics before the week began and how have this week’s experiences contributed to your understanding of these digital literacies? First, I learned the value of creating authentic products and learning by a collaborative process. I learned that the technology and the digital literacies will continue to evolve and change. An example of this rapid evolution is social networking sites. Creating authentic learning will be a constant and is so critical for our students. Different cool tool segments and hot topic workshops gave me the opportunity to explore in a supported and scaffolded environment. I also appreciated the amount of reflection required this week. So often, I try new technology tools but I never really give myself the time to digest and to reflect on best practices. I think I will be more mindful of incorporating reflection as a part of my continued learning process.
2. Now that you have had this professional development experience, how are you defining “digital literacy?” **What is your personal perspective on digital literacy** and how has your definition changed or evolved this week? Where possible, make specific connections to readings, conversations, presentations, or activities that were especially important to the evolution of your definition of digital literacy. I am now defining digital literacies as “utilizing new technologies and tools to consider and create authentic products that best reflect the process of learning.” As I stated before I think that in the past my perspective on digital literacy was more focused on new tools and how to incorporate them into teaching only. I really did not have a framework for how to use inquiry to guide both the learning process as well as the “cool tool” selection. I really found that I learned so much from the other participant’s comments and questions.

One comment that resonated with me was Margaret Hagood (University of Charleston) said that she felt that we always were asking about how students could use tools to learn but we need to remember to ask how the teachers can use these tools to frame their teaching. I also appreciated Julie and Michelle’s presentation of their research on literacy. Another important connection Renee Hobbs made for me is that with all the different literacies that we talk about there is really one literacy. We are all in this one literacy together. In the future, there will be one literacy.

1. **How do digital literacies affect the way you think about** **academic content**? Describe an example of how some specific academic content is affected by changes in the ways we read, write and think with digital media texts, tools & technologies. As a high school librarian, I can most appreciate the changes to the research and writing process. Students are able to research topics from a variety of primary source documents that would not have been readily accessible twenty years ago. For example, I have had students researching the Civil Rights era. They are able to access Martin Luther King on video, listen to President Kennedy’s speeches via podcast, and interview a famous civil rights leader on Skype. These same digital tools make it easier for students to correctly cite their sources, get feedback on their writing, and collaborate with other students utilizing Google docs for example.

Many mind mapping tools, such as MindMeister, have provided the tools to facilitate group projects. Google Hangout and Skype make it possible to collaborate across the globe cheaply and easily. I have found that at my high school, the students are able to find more and better resources given the growth of on-line databases and eBook collections. These resources would not have been affordable in the past. However, increased content, demand, and technology have opened this channel to more high school libraries. I also see more teachers able to easily collaborate utilizing tools such as Google docs, Skype, and even just sharing on-line lessons.

Digital literacies are facilitating professional development by enhancing creativity and collaboration.

1. **How do digital literacies affect teaching practices? What** overarching considerations must teachers give, in general, to the interactions of digital literacies and how to teach? Now, focus on your own **pedagogical practice**. How will your new understanding of digital literacy affect the way **you** teach? Describe an example of how you will differently employ a specific teaching practice in your own context as a result of what you learned this week. Digital literacies give teachers the opportunities to engage students in authentic projects. For example, students can not only read about local news, they can utilize cameras and editing software to create their own news documentaries or public service announcements. Digital literacies give teachers the tools to “flip” the classroom and create a student-centered, hands-on learning environment instead of continuing the traditional lecture style classroom practices. Teachers need to consider why and how they are utilizing these tools before they employ digital literacy tools. Teachers must start with what they want to students to learn before they begin using digital literacies. They need to consider Bloom’s Taxonomy and other cognitive tools to consider why to embed digital literacies before they decide to use these tools in their instruction.

Before attending the Institute on Digital Literacy, I had an understanding of digital literacies and new technology tools used in teaching. I was able to keep up with what was available. I was not, however, able to find the time to try constructing my learning and lesson plans with digital literacies. I was very intimidated by all the tools. I also was concerned that if I did not know a tool better than the teachers and students that I would somehow appear ignorant. This week has taught me that it is O.K. not to be the “expert” even if you are the teacher. I have learned how to ask other teachers and students to help me to utilize new digital literacies. I have learned to scaffold my own learning through collaborating with younger teachers and students who are much better at utilizing these digital tools. I learned that I could learn from collaborating with new teachers who are more familiar with digital literacies. I will also create lessons that allow the students to show each other digital tools rather than have me try to “talk” everyone through these step by step. This might look like face-to-face instruction, screen casts, YouTube videos, podcasts, or even small interactive learning centers. I realize that I will have to make my teaching more student centered and student led.

1. During the week, you were introduced to **several concerns and promising practices** around digital literacy, digital pedagogy, social networking, and student voice that are circulating among communities of educators, librarians, and youth media specialists. From your perspective, what promising practices show the most potential? Which specific concerns are most pressing? What key takeaways will you champion in your own work setting(s) so that together, you and your colleagues can (a) implement promising practices and (b) address issues of concern? In my observations, I saw that teachers gravitated to opportunities to create social networked learning. I think that the new digital tools such as Good Notes, Ever Note, Symbaloo—Twitter, Storify provide a common foundation to build personal and professional learning networks. They also provide a common interface for teachers to discover and share information and best practices. This will also facilitate knowledge creation because of the discovery and creation of these spaces and stories.

What concerns me the most is that the teachers will utilize the iMovie, Animoto, and other creative products without giving consideration to the reason that they are utilizing these new digital literacies tools. I think the Digital Literacies Framework (“Flower”) model is a very concise and simple way to build lessons that thoughtfully consider including digital literacies. This framework reminds us to start with essential questions or inquiry and to build the lesson or learning.

I think the most essential takeaway that I got from the institute was the Digital Literacies Framework or “Flower.” Ironically, this is the least “digital” of everything we explored this week. I am confident, however, that this is the most concrete introduction for modeling how to let inquiry guide collaboration and creation. In addition, even “old school” teachers like me will feel comfortable utilizing a graphic organizer. I think this common tool will be utilized.

My concern is that I will not have success with convincing my administration (at both my school and school district) to consider a formal digital literacies curriculum. The current atmosphere in public K-12 education is all based on raising test scores. Many worthy learning experience have been pushed to the side given the current “testing fever.” I fear that it might be difficult for me to convince other faculty that a digital literacies curriculum is essential for our students—students who are growing up in a digital world. I would absolutely love to see the Powerful Voices curriculum in my school district’s curriculum.

1. Consider the list of readings assigned for this course. Briefly, summarize 1-2 key insights you gleaned from each cluster of readings (e.g., Digital Literacies in Context, Generating Questions, Instructional Strategies, and Next Steps). How do you see these insights connecting with ideas and experiences shared during the Institute (especially the Keynote and Digging Deeper Sessions)?
   * If you are a graduate student, how do these readings connect to ideas in the literature base with which you are engaged?
   * If you are a classroom teacher, librarian, or youth media specialist, what connections do you see among the readings themselves and to your experiences during the institute or in your own work setting?

**Digital Literacies in Context:** I could identify with the Sherry Turkle’s piece on being alone all together. Doug Rushkoff reiterated this need to constantly be connected for fear of being by ourselves. Rushkoff warns that we are becoming a society that cannot disconnect. Turkle further emphasizes that “Solitude is where you find yourself.” I have been concerned that students today (including my son) are too connected. Both Rushkoff and Turkle urge us to be present in the moment. They both talk about the importance of reflection and conversation in cognitive development. I think the Digital Literacies Institute emphasized and modeled both the conversation and the reflection piece with participants. I felt that I had wonderful opportunities to discover things on my own, discuss with participants, share, and reflect. In fact, I have never been to any professional development where we had so much technology and yet we really collaborated and listened to each other.

**Generating Questions:** The Bowker and Wiggins articles were particularly meaningful to me as a high school (and former middle school) teacher. Part of my evaluation under the new TEAM Evaluation in TN is generating questions. It is ironic that my evaluation stems devotes an entire section to the teachers’ questioning skills. What I have gathered from this research is that we should not focus so much on teachers but rather focus on students and their questions. We should guide their inquiry but not frame their questions. Bowker states that we should teach students how to ask questions. I want to make a bumper sticker out of Grant Wiggins declaration that “ …students should be uncovering a topic not just covering a topic.” Wiggins is correct in his belief that students need to have the confidence and support to follow open-ended inquiry. Bowker tells us that we must “hold” students while we support and show them how to ask questions.

Hiller and Rhys led an inquiry-based exercise where we created Storify stories on US foreign involvement. This group project gave me a taste of how framing your own question as a student is the most important part of creating your own learning and ultimately your own “voice.” I also have to credit Julie and Renee’s Digital Literacy Flower for giving me an excellent tool to engage students in working through the steps to utilize guided inquiry effectively when developing digital literacies.

**Instructional Strategies:** These three articles gave very concrete strategies and learning theory to support student-centered learning utilizing digital literacies. Hiller Spire’s “Cinema Veriteen” outlines a great group project that I could easily use with high school freshmen in our history class. I plan to implement this approach and to collaborate with the US history teacher utilizing my 10 FLIP cameras. I also found the article about TPACK to be useful because of the way it gave a rubric for all the different instructional strategies and what digital literacies supported them. I have seen a similar pyramid that showed the product logos. This is a very nice piece for me to have when I am writing lesson plans and incorporating pedagogy and instructional strategies for my teaching evaluations next year.

Finally, Julie Coiro’s article about metacognition strategies with reading instruction was fascinating. I realize that I often “read” over students or read out loud when trying to instruct them in finding information or how to locate information on-line. Usually I do this because I am in a hurry or they are pressed for time. Students need to be able to find authoritative information quickly and to decide if it is relevant. I never had considered a more structured or planned instruction of scaffolding reading for students until I read Coiro’s article. I will plan to utilize this kind of scaffolding with my students who are reluctant readers.

All three articles provided excellent pedagogy and instructional strategies that will support the Common Core Curriculum by improving students ability to read and comprehend texts particularly primary sources. This will prove extremely valuable to me, as my state has adopted CCC this year.

**Next Steps:** All I can say is WOW! I wish I had read the White Paper that Renee Hobbs wrote before our Institute. I do not know quite how to narrow down all that I “gleaned” from this important paper---and 70 pages is not a paper! I appreciated the simple suggestions grounded in her 10 recommendations. There were several that I felt that I could implement in my own public high school immediately. This included the Globaloria or perhaps some program similar to the Common Language Project. Renee’s paper reminded me of the importance of integrating current events, media and the news. Next year I will approach our AP Government teacher about integrating this into her usual paper project. I think that students deserve to have adults teach them how to question and examine the media that surrounds them.

As media becomes even more prevalent, it will be even more important that our children have the ability to make sense of it. Renee has given some great concrete steps for how to achieve this. This white paper and the entire week at the institute have reminded me of the need to expose and educate high school students.

For years I have said that public school libraries needed AmeriCorps/TFA volunteers to help us. Facing cutbacks in recent years, I think it is critical that we get this piece. Libraries are more important than ever to provide literacies, including digital, and the librarians need more partners in this endeavor. I also have been concerned that charter schools lack libraries, librarians, and teachers who will address media and digital literacies. I really appreciate the suggestions found in this white paper to provide charter school students with a valuable summer program.

Finally, I like the recommendation for more opportunities for teacher education. My collaborator and dyad partner just graduated from college with a teaching degree. The opportunity for her to work with me and for me to learn from her knowledge of digital literacies was invaluable. I would make one additional recommendation for this white paper. I would recommend that all pre-service teacher programs include a model for collaboration between student teachers and experienced teachers. I would suggest that they collaborate on a digital literacies project.

1. If you had one more day in the Institute, what would you like to learn more about and why? How will you leverage your professional learning network and your new digital literacies to explore your remaining questions over the coming year? I would have like to have been able to learn more about podcasting. I have purchased books in the past but never followed through on podcasting. I like the ease of podcasting from all the descriptions but I have absolutely no idea where to start. I think podcasting could be less intimidating for students since it is quick and easy compared to even a short video. A podcast might interest more shy students since you only record your voice. I plan to continue to utilize Twitter to stay connected to institute participants and leaders. I will continue to follow their learning, their questions, their concerns, and their discoveries. I will use new tools like Symbaloo to build a better Professional Learning Network that I can more easily access. I will begin to blog again and I can extend my PLN by posting questions, thoughts and ideas. I also think that if I try to collaborate and work with new teachers at my school this year, this will provide an opportunity to learn more about myself, my teaching and digital literacies. I plan to also attend more conferences that have sessions where I can learn about new digital literacies. I really believe that having opportunities, like the Summer Institute on Digital Literacies, to interact in person is extremely valuable to building professional networks.